

Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation
Water Resources Division
Water Rights Bureau

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
For Routine Actions with Limited Environmental Impact

Part I. Proposed Action Description

1. *Applicant/Contact name and address:* City of Whitefish, PO Box 158, Whitefish MT 59937
2. *Type of action:* Beneficial Water Use Permit 76LJ 30065715
3. *Water source name:* Whitefish Lake
4. *Location affected by project:* Service area of the city of Whitefish located within city limits and those adjacent areas
5. *Narrative summary of the proposed project, purpose, action to be taken, and benefits:*
The DNRC shall issue a water use permit if an applicant proves the criteria in 85-2-311 MCA are met.

Applicant proposes to divert water from Whitefish Lake, by means of a pump, from January 1 through December 31 at 1100 GPM up to 1706.22 AF, from a point in the NW $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 24, Township 31N, Range 22W, Flathead County for municipal use from January 1 through December 31. This Application is for future municipal growth and the place of use is generally located within the current Whitefish city limits and those adjacent areas outside the city limits where the city provides service.

6. Agencies consulted during preparation of the Environmental Assessment:
(include agencies with overlapping jurisdiction)

Montana Natural Heritage Program
Montana State Historical Society
Natural Resources and Conservation Service soil maps
Montana Department of Environmental Quality
United States Fish and Wildlife Wetland Mapper

Part II. Environmental Review

1. **Environmental Impact Checklist:**

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

WATER QUANTITY, QUALITY AND DISTRIBUTION

Water quantity - Assess whether the source of supply is identified as a chronically or periodically dewatered stream by DFWP. Assess whether the proposed use will worsen the already dewatered condition.

Determination: Whitefish Lake/Whitefish River is not listed.

Water quality - Assess whether the stream is listed as water quality impaired or threatened by DEQ, and whether the proposed project will affect water quality.

Montana Department of Environmental Quality lists Whitefish Lake as having aquatic life being threatened with probable causes being mercury, polychlorinated biphenyls and sedimentation/siltation. Sources were listed as unknown except road construction and use which were probable causes for sedimentation.

Determination: No immediate impact.

Groundwater - Assess if the proposed project impacts ground water quality or supply. If this is a groundwater appropriation, assess if it could impact adjacent surface water flows.

Determination: No impact and surface water was evaluated via the permit process.

DIVERSION WORKS - Assess whether the means of diversion, construction and operation of the appropriation works of the proposed project will impact any of the following: channel impacts, flow modifications, barriers, riparian areas, dams, well construction.

Water is diverted from Whitefish Lake at the pump station for approximately 0.8 miles through a 21.6 inch PVC pipe with a capacity of 14,000 GPM to the water treatment plant. The pump station currently consists of three variable-speed Goulds Turbine, 100 HP pumps. Presently, two pumps operate simultaneously with the third pump serving as a back-up. The maximum rate per pump for two pumps is approximately 1,150 GPM each or 2,300 GPM total. Each pump will produce approximately 1,080 GPM each if all three pumps are used simultaneously or 3,240 GPM total. The total design capacity of the Whitefish Lake pumping facility is 6.0 million gallons per day (MGD) or 4,168 GPM total using four pumps in the future.

Determination: No impact

UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES

Endangered and threatened species - Assess whether the proposed project will impact any threatened or endangered fish, wildlife, plants or aquatic species or any "species of special concern," or create a barrier to the migration or movement of fish or wildlife. For groundwater, assess whether the proposed project, including impacts on adjacent surface flows, would impact any threatened or endangered species or "species of special concern."

The Montana Natural Heritage Program's website was used to determine if there are any threatened or endangered fish, wildlife, plants or aquatic species or any "species of special

concern”, that could be impacted by the proposed project. The following animals were identified on that list located regionally: Wolverine, Hoary Bat, Canada Lynx, Fisher, Grizzly Bear, Pileated Woodpecker, Northern Alligator Lizard, Westslope Cutthroat Trout, Pyhmy Whitefish, Bull Trout, Lake Trout, Sheathed Slug, Crested Shieldfern, Creeping Sedge, Giant Helleborine, Slender Cottongrass and A. Lichen.

Determination: No immediate impact – no change from current use.

Wetlands - *Consult and assess whether the apparent wetland is a functional wetland (according to COE definitions), and whether the wetland resource would be impacted.*

Determination: Property not located in a designated wetland boundary.

Ponds - *For ponds, consult and assess whether existing wildlife, waterfowl, or fisheries resources would be impacted.*

Determination: No pond

GEOLOGY/SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE - *Assess whether there will be degradation of soil quality, alteration of soil stability, or moisture content. Assess whether the soils are heavy in salts that could cause saline seep.*

The majority of soils in this Upper Flathead Valley area is Wits and Krause stony loams with 12 to 40 percent slopes and high capacity to transmit water. Half Moon silt loam with 0 to 3 percent slopes is also abundant with moderately high transmissivity. Both are considered nonsaline to very slightly saline.

Determination: No impact to soil quality or alteration of soil stability expected.

VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY/NOXIOUS WEEDS - *Assess impacts to existing vegetative cover. Assess whether the proposed project would result in the establishment or spread of noxious weeds.*

Determination: No impact.

AIR QUALITY - *Assess whether there will be a deterioration of air quality or adverse effects on vegetation due to increased air pollutants.*

Determination: No impacts are anticipated

HISTORICAL AND ARCHEOLOGICAL SITES - *Assess whether there will be degradation of unique archeological or historical sites in the vicinity of the proposed project if it is on State or Federal Lands*

Determination: N/A – project not located on State or Federal Lands

DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AND ENERGY - Assess any other impacts on environmental resources of land, water and energy not already addressed.

Determination: No changes

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS - Assess whether the proposed project is inconsistent with any locally adopted environmental plans and goals.

Determination: Developed per city/county regulations

ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES - Assess whether the proposed project will impact access to or the quality of recreational and wilderness activities.

Determination: No impact

HUMAN HEALTH - Assess whether the proposed project impacts on human health.

Determination: No impact

PRIVATE PROPERTY - Assess whether there are any government regulatory impacts on private property rights.

Yes___ No **XX** If yes, analyze any alternatives considered that could reduce, minimize, or eliminate the regulation of private property rights.

Determination: No impacts

OTHER HUMAN ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES - For routine actions of limited environmental impact, the following may be addressed in a checklist fashion.

Impacts on:

- (a) Cultural uniqueness and diversity? N/A
- (b) Local and state tax base and tax revenues? N/A
- (c) Existing land uses? Regulated through city and county regs
- (d) Quantity and distribution of employment? N/A
- (e) Distribution and density of population and housing? Regulated
- (f) Demands for government services? N/A

(g) Industrial and commercial activity? Regulated

(h) Utilities? Expansion as needed

(i) Transportation? Increased traffic

(j) Safety? State regulated

(k) Other appropriate social and economic circumstances? None

2. *Secondary and cumulative impacts on the physical environment and human population:*

Secondary Impacts None

Cumulative Impacts None

3. *Describe any mitigation/stipulation measures:*
None

4. *Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives to the proposed action, including the no action alternative, if an alternative is reasonably available and prudent to consider:*

PART III. Conclusion

1. *Preferred Alternative* As proposed

2. *Comments and Responses* None

3. *Finding:*
Yes___ No XX Based on the significance criteria evaluated in this EA, is an EIS required?

If an EIS is not required, explain why the EA is the appropriate level of analysis for this proposed action: Basic overview needed

Name of person(s) responsible for preparation of EA:

Name: Kathy Olsen

Title: Water Resource Specialist

Date: December 31, 2013